



BAPU

PART I

F. C. FREITAS



Nehru Bal Pustakalaya

BAPU

[PART I]

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY

F. C. FREITAS



NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA



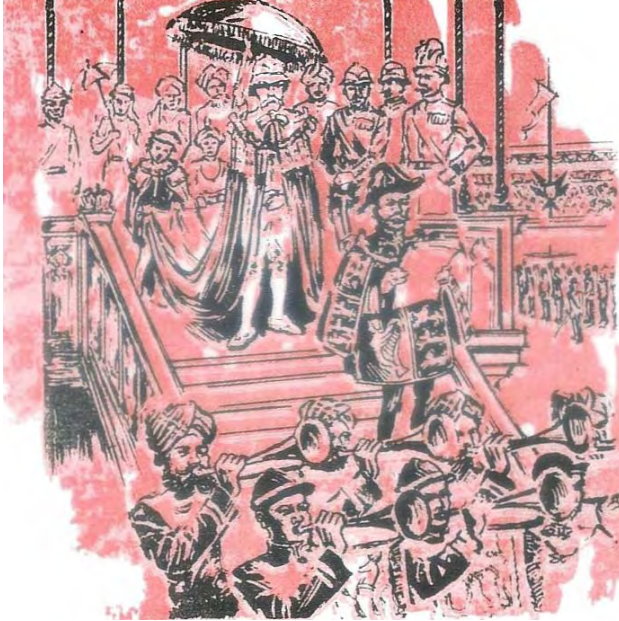
ISBN 978-81-237-1026-6

First Edition 1970

Tenth Reprint 2009 (*Saka* 1930)

© F.e. Freitas, 1970

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India



It was the year 1878. There was **great** excitement in Delhi, once the capital of great kingdoms and **huge** empires. To the city flocked Maharajas, Nawabs and hundreds of princes from all parts of India. They were dressed in finery and bedecked with jewels. The Viceroy, who represented the British rulers in India, came with his court all the way from Calcutta, then capital of British India.

All was ready for a *darbar*, or a "great meeting" of royalty. These were held only once in a while and for very **special** occasions. This time too It was for a special **purpose**: to proclaim Queen Victoria of England as Empress of India.

The P"inces and all others offered their loyalty to the

Queen and promised faithful support to her. They hoped that British rule would continue long on the land.

It certainly would have continued for years and years had it not been for one who at that time was a frail little nine-year-old boy.

That lad was carefully chalking his tables on a slate. Like all of us, he too struggled to master them. But even at that young age, he had begun to learn proper discipline and recognise the importance of a strong will. It was his determination that later helped him to face the might of the British Empire and overcome it for his country and his countrymen.

Sixty-nine years after the *darbar*, the twentieth British Viceroy, a great-grandson of Queen Victoria, declared India to be free. The name of that Viceroy was Lord Mountbatten. And the little boy mentioned above was Mohandas Gandhi, the hero of India's non-violent fight for freedom.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born 124 years ago on October 2, 1869, in a little town, Porbandar. It





nestled on the sea-coast of Kathiawar, in what is today Gujarat State. He was the youngest of four children, three boys and a girl. His father, Karamchand or Kaba Gandhi, and mother, Putlibai, belonged to the trader caste. The family name 'Gandhi' means grocer, but its members were administrators. His grandfather was the Dewan of Porbandar and his father was in turn the Dewan of Porbandar, Rajkot and Vankaner. Kaba Gandhi was truthful, brave and generous.

To Mohan his father became a symbol of discipline and good behaviour. And his mother won his admiration for her great **piety**. "She," he wrote in his *Autobiography*. "was deeply religious." She was a woman of simple faith. She never missed going to the temple. She took him to the temple every day. This planted in his tender and

innocent mind a great and unshakeable faith in **God** and a religious spirit that **brought** him joy and consolation.

Always a shy boy, Mohan was happy only with his books. His life moved round his home and school, and specially round his gentle mother, whom he adored. **He** looked with wonder and admiration upon her saintliness her practice of prayer and fasting for self-purification.

As a boy, his only desire was to acquire the habit (of speaking truth. He also learned that good should be returned for evil.

'Chaturmas' is a period of fasting in the rainy season. Mohan's mother would not touch food until she had set her eyes on the sun. Mohan and his sister often stood waiting to spot the sun. Then, they rushed to announce the appearance of 'the maker of the night and day'.

Many times the sun remained hidden among the clouds,





filling the children with disappointment. But their mother, always calm and confident, consoled them, saying that God did not wish that she should eat that day.

Mohan's parents had received no school education, but they were keen that their son should go to school! He was sent to local schools at Porbandar and Rajkot.

He was not brilliant, but was always studious, doing his lessons regularly. He read only his school books and a few religious plays which he liked.

Once, a travelling group of actors staged a play in the neighbourhood. Mohan and his friends went to see it. The play was "Hanshchandra", and it depicted the story of King Harishchandra, whose devotion to truth and duty was very great. His honesty and sense of duty were so



profound that he did not spare his own wife in making her obey the law.

The play moved Mohan beyond words. He wept and longed to be as truthful and honest as Harishchandra, however difficult the path might be. His dedication to truth was complete.

Mr. Giles, an Englishman on an "inspection day" visit, was testing the boys' spellings. All of them except Mohandas spelt correctly the five simple words he had asked them to write down. Mohandas just could not spell the word "kettle"

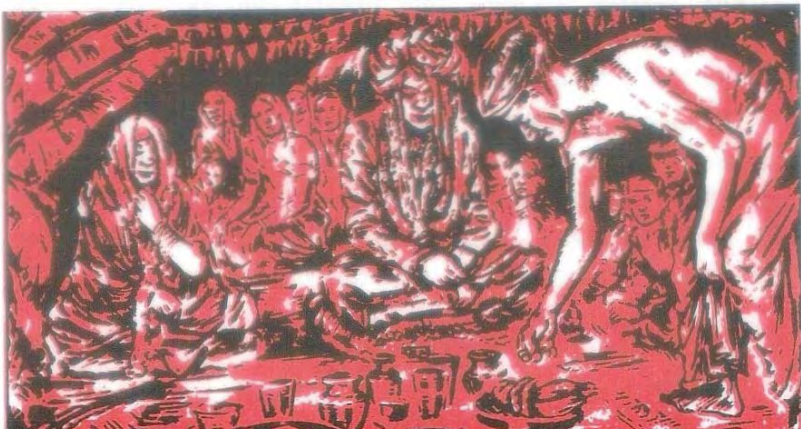
The teacher was terrified as his own reputation was at stake. He made signs to his student to copy the word from his neighbour's slate. Mohan stood still, looking straight ahead of him, refusing to cheat even when the Inspector's

attention was elsewhere. He felt disgraced, and knew that his classmates would laugh at him and his teacher would scold him. But he also knew that truth could not be betrayed by cheating, cost what it may. He preferred to remain silent.

Mohan's teacher scolded him after the class. When he returned home, he felt hurt and wounded, miserable and alone. But deep inside him he felt a warm glow, a new strength. He knew that what he had done was right.

Early marriages were very common then. Mohan was only 13 years old when he was married. His wife, Kasturbai, was the same age. Later he described child marriages as "a cruel custom", but at that time there was no choice for him.

Kasturbai had a deep devotion to duty. She had never been to school and could not read or write, but had a great deal of commonsense. She was of great help to her husband. Self-sacrificing and always ready to share his work, she became a loving companion to him, lending strength to him in times of difficulty and hardship.





Mohan's marriage interfered with his education and he lost a year at school. But his teachers were anxious that he should continue his studies and make up for lost time by aiming at a double promotion. Mohan applied himself to his studies with vigour, struggled through the necessary portion and his efforts were crowned with success.

As a student Mohan was always slow, hesitant and shy. Though he worked hard, he aimed at something more than classroom success. He tried to develop a strong character and a spotless reputation.

The "kettle" incident had proved that he was always loyal to truth. In the years that followed, he earned for himself the love and goodwill of all his teachers.

The usual games and sports did not attract him. He was very fond of long and brisk walks in the open air. He took them regularly and this habit remained with him all his life. As he said later, it gave him strength and energy. Thus, he grew to be vigorous, active and truthful.

All the same, Mohan was still very human and did fall a prey to temptations. He once stole a piece of gold. But soon after that he was seized with remorse.

He resolved never to steal again. He also decided to make a clean confession of it to his father. But *his* father lay ill and that made Mohan more and more miserable.

He could bear it no more. He then wrote out a note confessing his guilt and asking punishment for it.

As his father read the note, tears trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. He was moved by his son's honesty. He tore up the paper and forgave him.





"**From** that day," Mohan wrote **later** on, "telling the truth became a passion with me." He was convinced that truth **had** its own *power* and he would never forget that.

When Mohan was about sixteen, his father died. He helped nurse him in his last illness. He massaged his legs and comforted him until he fell asleep.

As a good son, it gave him great satisfaction to be of help to his father. It was unfortunate that his father's death occurred when he was not by his bedside. Mohan **was** sorry about this forever.

In 1887, when he was about eighteen, Monan passed the matriculation examination from Ahmedabad. He had now to choose a career. He wished to become a doctor to help the sick but his family did not approve of it.

Instead, an old friend and adviser suggested that he be **sent** to England to study law.

Mohan was thrilled at the idea of going abroad, but his **orthodox** mother was not in favour of this: She was afraid

of the strange customs of the English and the many temptations to which her son would be exposed there.

He pleaded with his mother to let him go and promised to her that he would not eat meat or take liquor. At last, to satisfy her he took a vow. Then he went **to** Bombay, from where he boarded a steamer for England. He arrived in London in October, 1888.

In England, Mohan was faced with numerous handicaps. There was the difficulty of the English way of life. Food was a big problem and when he did get vegetarian food, it always seemed to be tasteless.

For some time he stayed in an expensive hotel, but soon shifted to a **cheaper** and friendlier boarding-house. Still, he felt lost and lonely.

Once, at a fashionable hotel, a friend of his became annoyed because Mohan would not eat with him. "You





are too clumsy for decent society," his friend said in anger. This remark hurt Mohan and set him thinking.

He decided to become an "English gentleman". *He* ordered fashionable clothes, and bought a chimney top-hat and a gold watch-chain. But his wiry and straight hair would not settle down to make his appearance perfect!

That was only the first step. The complete "English gentleman" must also be able to play music, dance and speak well. He took lessons in ballroom dancing, bought a violin and engaged a tutor to teach him Western music. He also began studying elocution and French.

Despite his best efforts, his plans did not work. His feet just would not move with the music. **His** efforts to

learn Western music also failed. After three painful months of "aping the English gentleman", as he described it later, he came to realise that he was making a fool of himself.

He had come to England to study law, he argued. Then why was he wasting his precious time and his brother's hard-earned money chasing mere shadows? This **had to** end at once, he decided.

So, Mohan gave up all "fashionable" habits and ways of living. He now lived in a single room, cooked his own breakfast of porridge and cocoa.' For dinner he had bread and cocoa. His total expenses for the day were one shilling and three pence, or roughly one rupee. But his mind was free from useless thoughts and his soul was filled with joy.



He could also study more, for he had more free time now. He prepared for and passed the London Matriculation Examination. He learned Latin and French too. At the same time, he kept his terms for the law degree.

He did much experimentation With eating, and read all he could on the subject. He soon came to the conclusion that vegetarianism was by far the healthiest form of diet.

He made friends among vegetarians in London, and formed a vegetarian club in the area where he was staying. He himself became the secretary of the club, and was soon elected to the committee of the London Vegetarian Society. But when he attended the Society's meetings, he was too shy to speak, and was not able to participate actively in the discussions.

He consoled himself by saying that for a lover of truth, silence was a powerful weapon. It often prevented him from speaking untruths.

On June 10, 1891, Mohan, after a final period of nine months of serious study, was "called to the bar". That is, having passed his law examinations, he was enrolled on the





list of lawyers of the High Court in England. He was now a full-fledged barrister.

As he was to leave England the very next day, he invited his vegetarian friends to a farewell dinner. There had to be speeches, of course. Mohan carefully prepared himself and memorised his speech. But when the time came to deliver it, he was dumbfounded. He fumbled for words, and kept repeating the opening sentence. He tried to be funny, but that too did not work. He sat down confused. It was a terrible experience for him.

When he sailed for India, his heart was not at peace. True, he had passed his law examinations, he had become a barrister but would he be a success in India? Would he be able to practise as a lawyer in the Indian courts, where he would have to give speeches and that too not always before friends? Besides, how much of Indian law did he know?



These thoughts troubled him and spoilt somewhat the taste of his London success. Still, there was the thought of meeting his mother all of telling her that he had kept his promise. How deeply he loved her!

When he landed in Bombay, Mohan learned that his mother had passed away. He was heartbroken. but, as he wrote later,



"I did not give myself to any expression of grief. I could even check the tears, and took to life as though nothing had happened." It was the result of the self-control he had practised in England.

After a short stay in Rajkot, he returned to Bombay to begin his law career. His first case was heard in the Small Causes Court. Gandhiji's fee was 30 rupees.

When the time came for him to question a witness, words failed him. He could not even make a start. The court was filled with a strange silence. Gandhiji trembled and felt disgraced. At last, admitting defeat, he sat down, while all in the court laughed at his performance.

Gandhiji returned to Rajkot, but there was trouble in store for him. There was a case going on against his brother who needed help. Although he did not wish to do so, Gandhiji was persuaded to speak on his brother's behalf to

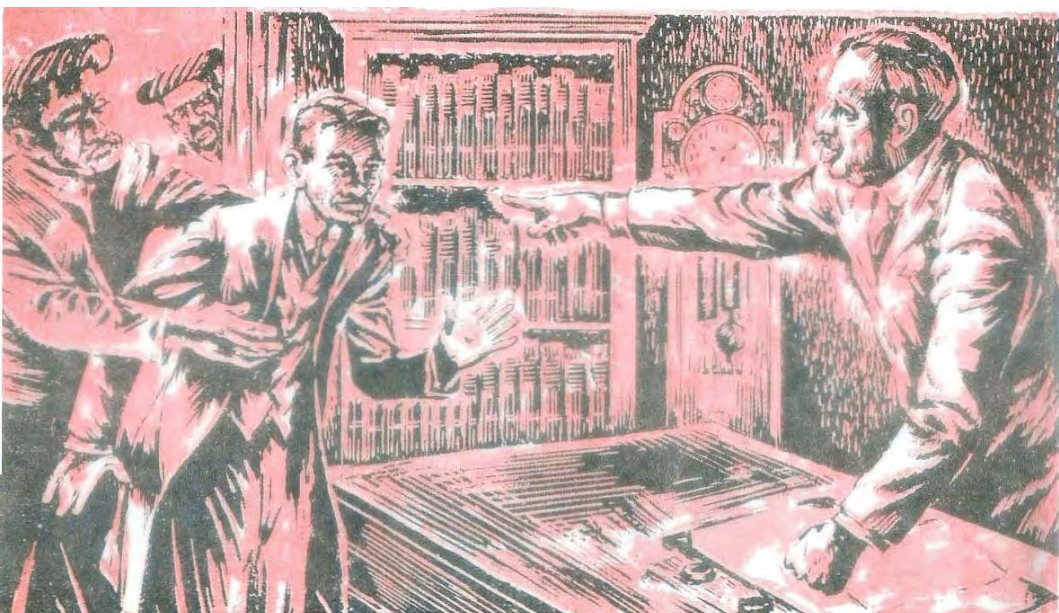


the British Political Agent (the representative of the Viceroy in Rajkot), an Englishman whom he had once met in England.

When he went to meet the Agent, Gandhiji was treated rudely. The Agent refused to listen to him and asked him to go away. When Gandhiji insisted on having his say, the Agent called his peon who pushed him out of the room.

This great insult showed clearly to him the harsh ways of the British in India. "This shock changed the course of my life," he stated.

That is why, when he was asked to become the legal adviser to an Indian firm in South Africa for a year, Gandhiji gladly accepted the offer. He sailed from Bombay in April, 1893 and landed at Natal, South Africa, a month later.





What Gandhiji saw in South Africa pained him. His countrymen were ill-treated and despised. They had no rights and even the educated among them could not mix with South African Europeans. Their brown colour was, it seemed, a mark of disgrace. Most of them were called "coolies", which was a term of contempt. He was **called** a "coolie" barrister.



Very soon Gandhiji experienced what this meant in practice. He was travelling by train to Pretoria. He had a first-class ticket and was seated in a first-class compartment. But not for long. When the train halted at a station, a European passenger came. Seeing a coloured man inside, he complained to the railway officials about it.

They asked Gandhiji to leave the compartment and travel in the luggage van! "But I have a first-class ticket," he said. Soon, a policeman seized him and pushed him out. It was nine at night and very cold. All night he sat shivering in the waiting-room.

Next morning, Gandhiji caught a train to Charlestown, where he bought a stage-coach ticket for Johannesburg. But there again, as white passengers were travelling inside the coach, he was asked to sit by the coach-box.

For the sake of peace, he did so. At a wayside stop,





however, a white man rudely ordered Gandhiji to give him his seat and to occupy, instead, the footboard which was covered with a dirty piece of cloth.

Gandhiji did not move, and so the angry white man caught his arm and tried to pull him down, at the same time dealing him savage blows. It was an ugly sight. Luckily, the others came to his rescue, and he was allowed to keep his seat and continue undisturbed.

These unhappy experiences filled Gandhiji with a great desire to put an end to the sufferings of his people in South Africa. When he reached Pretoria, he began meeting

Indians there. His idea was to unite them, for separately they could easily be bullied by the white men.

As a result of his efforts, a meeting of all Indians was held and Gandhiji made his first public speech. He spoke about the need for unity, but he also pointed out how necessary it was to be truthful in business, and to live in a clean hygienic manner. Finally, he asked them to form an association to work for their own good and to remove the hardships from which they were suffering.

Gandhiji had come to South Africa for one year. But as his services were needed there, he stayed on for three years.

Gandhiji settled out of court the case for which he had come to South Africa.

He helped many Indians in their court cases. One well-known case was that of a worker, Balasundararn, who had





been severely beaten by his European employer. Here too he secured his transfer to a less cruel master.

He returned to India in 1896 to take away his family and to spread the news of the miseries suffered by his people in South Africa. In December that year, he received a cable to return to Durban at once. Gandhiji went back with his wife, two sons and a nephew.

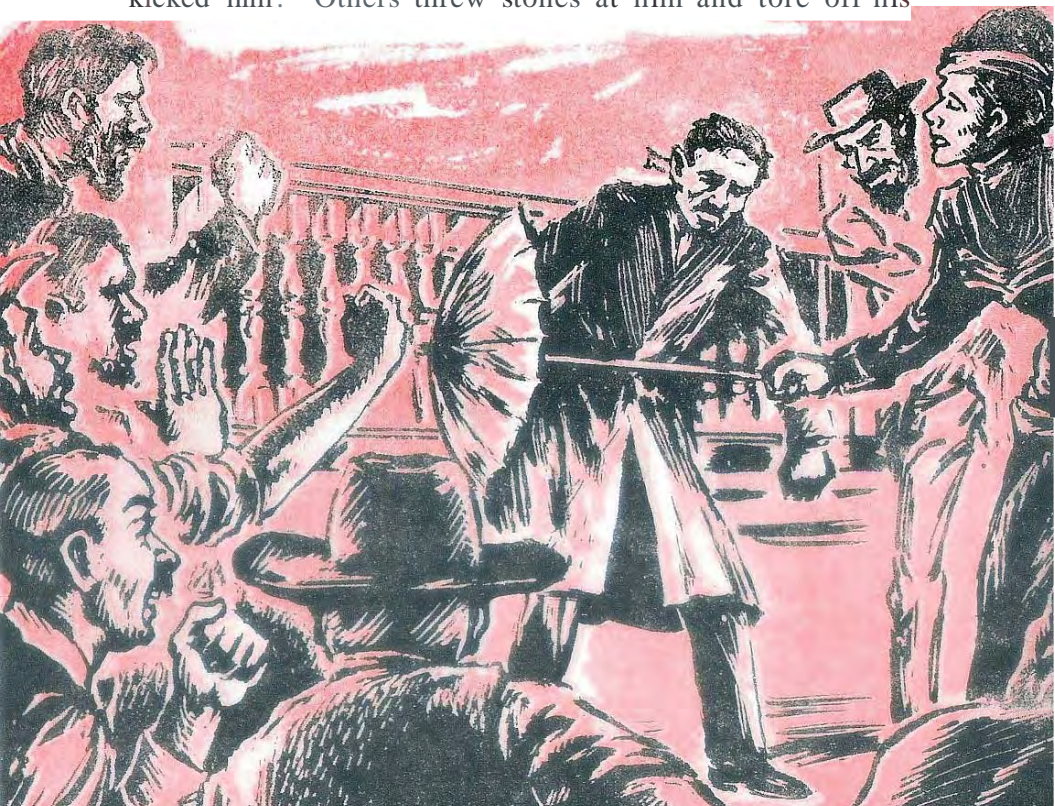
News of his speeches in India had made the white men furious. They tried their best to prevent him from landing. The two ships in which he and 800 other Indians had arrived were kept waiting in the harbour for 25 days. Dada



Abdulla and Co., the owners, were asked to send them back, but they refused.

When they were allowed to land, they were threatened with violence. Gandhiji was advised to wait until dark. He did not agree to humiliate himself thus. With a European lawyer friend, he stepped on shore in daylight. Immediately, there was trouble.

A few boys who threw stones at him were driven away. As they walked on, a crowd gathered and followed them. Suddenly, a big, rough man hit Gandhiji in the face and kicked him. Others threw stones at him and tore off his



turban. Wounded and almost unconscious, Gandhiji held on to the railings of a house for support, and after some time continued walking.

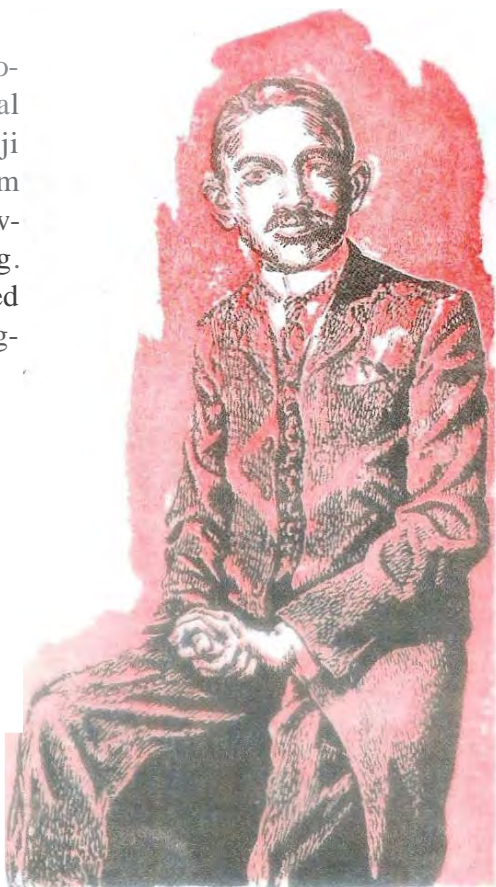
The police superintendent's wife was passing that way. She knew Gandhiji well and bravely opened her parasol to protect him. Both of them then walked on. They reached the police station, **from** where he went to a friend's house without further trouble.



Gandhiji continued his work there, organising the Natal Indian Congress, and helping the labourers. He went to India towards the end of 1901, promising to return to South Africa if he was needed.

True to his word, when he received a cable in March 1902, he hurried back. This time he was not to see India for 12 years.

Indians were not allowed to enter the Transvaal without a permit. Gandhiji decided to work for them there. He opened his lawyer's office in Johannesburg. From this place, he carried on his work for his long-suffering countrymen.



On August 22, 1906, the Transvaal Government passed an ordinance making it compulsory for all Indians of eight years and above to be registered. Each one would have to go to a Government office and give his name, address, caste, age, nature of work, etc. Fingerprints would be taken and identification marks noted. All Indians would have to carry certificates everywhere and show them whenever asked for, even in the streets. Those who failed to do so would be fined, jailed or deported from the country.

The ordinance was an insult to the Indians and they decided to fight it. At a big meeting in a Johannesburg theatre, 3,000 Indians, with Gandhiji's blessings, took an oath in the name of God not to register themselves. But the Transvaal Government was determined to have its way.



The "Black Ordinance", as it came to be called, came into force on the last day of July, 1907. On that day, the Indians gathered in great numbers on the grounds of a mosque in Pretoria. There they once again decided not to register themselves and not to apply for the certificates.

They were true to their word. Out of 13,000 Indians in the Transvaal, less than five hundred registered. This was a marvellous show of unity and a great triumph for Gandhiji.

The Government hit back. The Indian leaders were given 14 days to leave the Transvaal. But they stayed and were arrested and tried in court. Gandhiji asked the magistrate to give him the highest punishment possible. He



was sentenced to two months in prison. Soon, there were 150 Indians in jail.

A newspaper editor offered to help. The Indian leaders made it clear that they would not settle anything without Gandhiji. A written agreement was brought to him in prison. The Government would remove the Black Act, if the Indians registered themselves voluntarily. They would be consulted about details appearing in their certificates.

Two days later he met Gen. Jan Smuts, the Transvaal Prime Minister. The General promised to cancel the Black Act. Gandhiji became a free man and his fellow-prisoners were freed the following morning.



He returned to Pretoria and, at midnight, explained the agreement to a crowd of 1,000. They had many fears. Should not the Act be removed before they registered themselves? Gandhiji explained the need to observe the agreement like gentlemen. Many understood this, but some did not.

Early in the morning, as Gandhiji walked towards the registration office, three Pathans followed him. They surrounded him and began to question him. Suddenly, one of them hit Gandhiji with a heavy stick. The others gave him blows and kicks. He was knocked down unconscious.



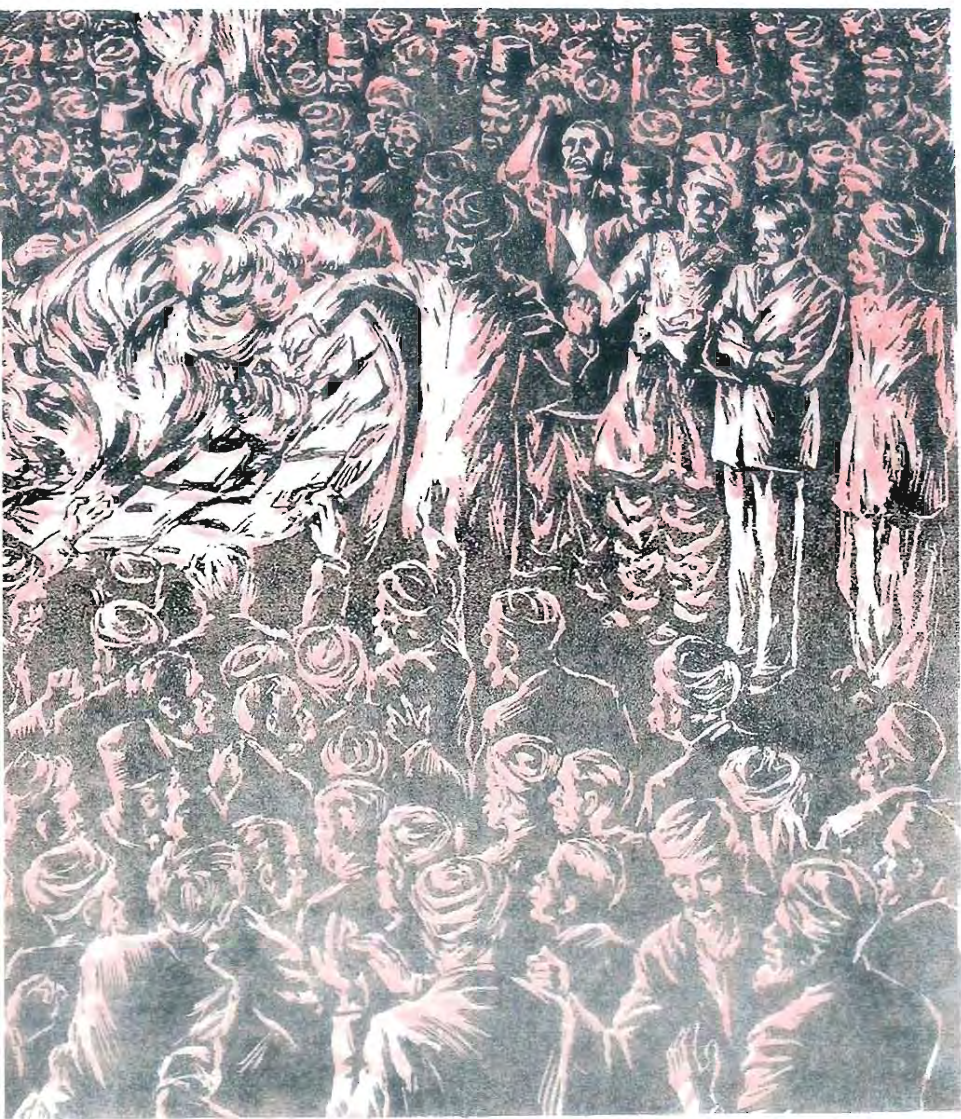


When he regained consciousness the first thing he did was to forgive Mir Alam, his assailant. On hearing that he had been arrested, he requested his release.

Gandhiji continued to face similar danger with calm courage. After a large meeting in Johannesburg, as he was walking out, he saw a man standing in the shadow of the porch. He went to the man, put his arms round him and said something to him in an earnest voice.

The man seemed hesitant and then spoke back. They walked quite a distance thus, still talking softly. Then he handed something over and walked away.

He had wanted to kill Gandhiji! And yet he had quietly handed over the knife to him. "Had] had him arrested. [



should have made an enemy of him," he said. "As it is, he will now be my friend."

General Smuts did not keep his word, and refused to repeal the Black Act. Once again, the Indians gathered at the same mosque and burned their certificates in a large cauldron. As the smoke rolled upwards, others came forward to drop in their certificates. Some two thousand of them were destroyed. The Indian leaders, including Gandhiji, were arrested. What is more, Indians without certificates had no right now to stay in the Transvaal. They could be asked to leave at any moment. Those who defied the immigration and segregation laws were imprisoned.

By now Gandhiji had been to jail a number of times. Often he had to do hard labour.

For him, the jail cap he wore became a symbol of his countrymen's desire for a more honourable way of life. It had the same design as the "Gandhi cap" which figured so prominently in India's freedom struggle later.

In June, 1909, Gandhiji went to England on a deputation and returned without securing any relief for Indians.





It was on board the ship that he wrote his famous book *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati. In this book he gave details of all his religious and political beliefs.

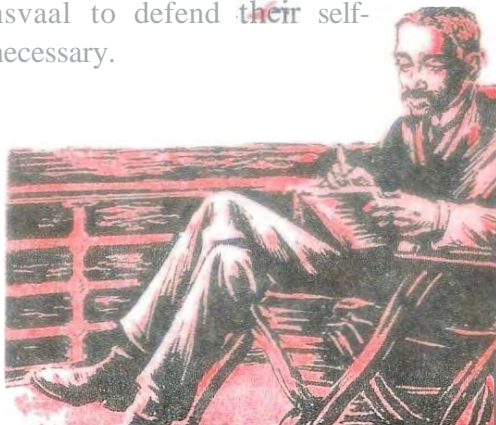
Gandhiji preached love in place of hatred and self-sacrifice in place of violence, "soul force" instead of brute force.

These were to be put to the test in South Africa.

In March, 1913, the Cape Supreme Court annulled all Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages, and the Government supported the court. Gandhiji decided to offer "satyagraha". This is made up of two words: "satya" meaning truth, and "agraha" meaning to insist on. Gandhiji's plan was to break the law by marching into the Transvaal peacefully. They had no right to be there without certificates and would certainly be arrested. That was exactly what they wanted.

The great march began on October 28. Gandhiji led it and following him were 2,500 men, women and children, with nothing more than a blanket, apart from the clothes they wore. Starting from Newcastle, this army of peace marched 36 miles to the Transvaal to defend their self-respect and to suffer for it, if necessary.

It was a wonderful sight, never witnessed before. Sympathy and support for the satyagrahis came from



all over the world. Their orderly, disciplined tramp echoed in the hearts of **millions**.

For four days they **marched** right into the Transvaal. On the fourth day, they were **arrested** and taken away in trains. Gandhiji had been arrested earlier and was sentenced to jail for three months.

Other leaders came from India to join the struggle.



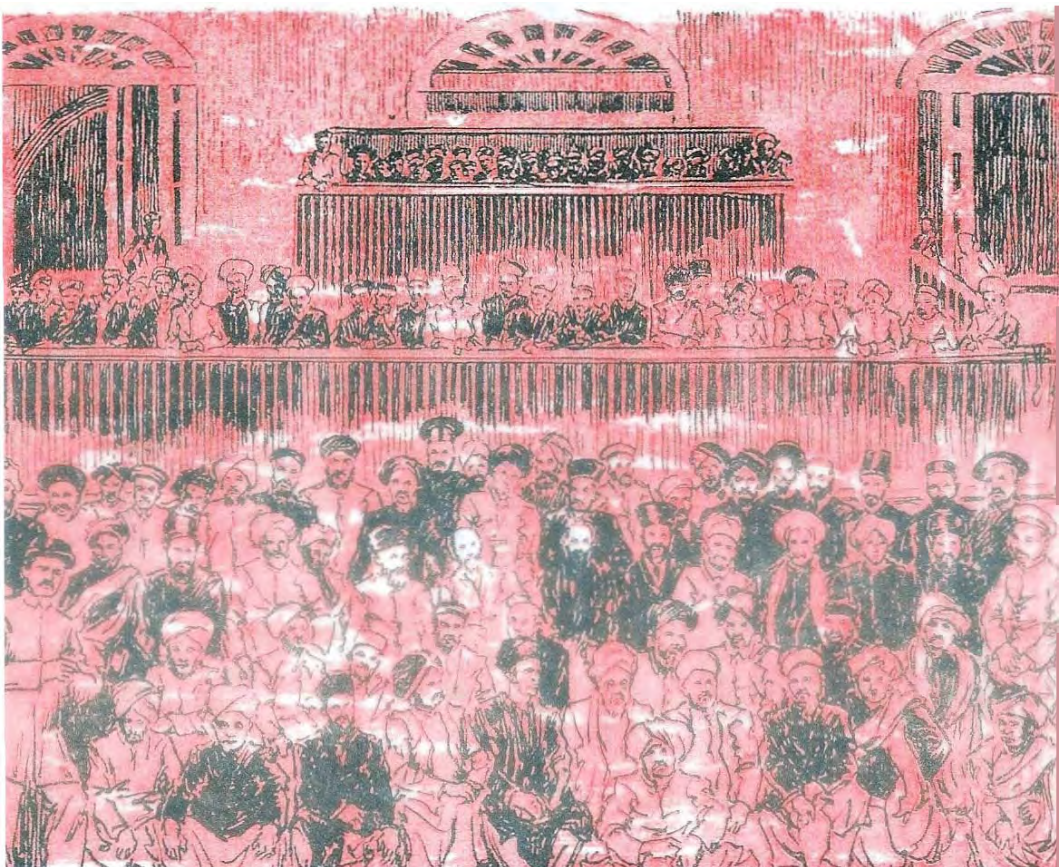
Gandhiji received them since he had been released. The Government was now looking for a solution. A commission with many anti-Indian members was appointed. The Indians boycotted it. Yet, the Indians won and compliance with all their demands forthwith was recommended.

The main battle had been won and now Gandhiji was ready to leave for home.



Great changes were taking place in India. A feeling that all people should unite was growing stronger.

It had started with the birth of the Indian National Congress. In 1885, an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume, thought of bringing together Indian leaders and others interested in and working for the progress of India. In such an organisation they could meet one another, and discuss their ideas. Instead of many different activities being



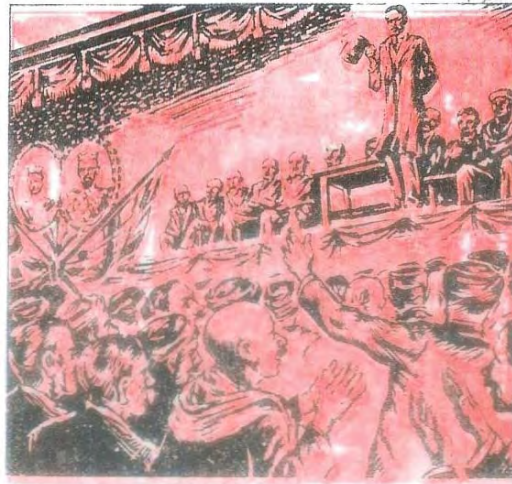
carried on in a small way, there would be one united action.

The first meeting of the Indian National Congress was held in the hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit Pathshala at Bombay on December 18, 1885. Seventy-two Invitees from all parts of India and belonging to all religions, as also some Englishmen, attended. The President was W.e. Bonerjee, from Bengal. The session lasted three days and ended with three cheers for Hume and "three times three cheers for Her Majesty the Queen-Empress".

The meeting aroused great interest among the people. At first the Congress was nothing better than a debating society and was meant to work for India's development through the British Government.

In the early sessions, pictures of British monarchs and the Union Jack were displayed prominently.

Later, under Gandhiji's inspiring leadership, the Congress became the champion of India's freedom. It attracted men and women from every community and its message reached even the remotest village. It changed the course of Indian history.



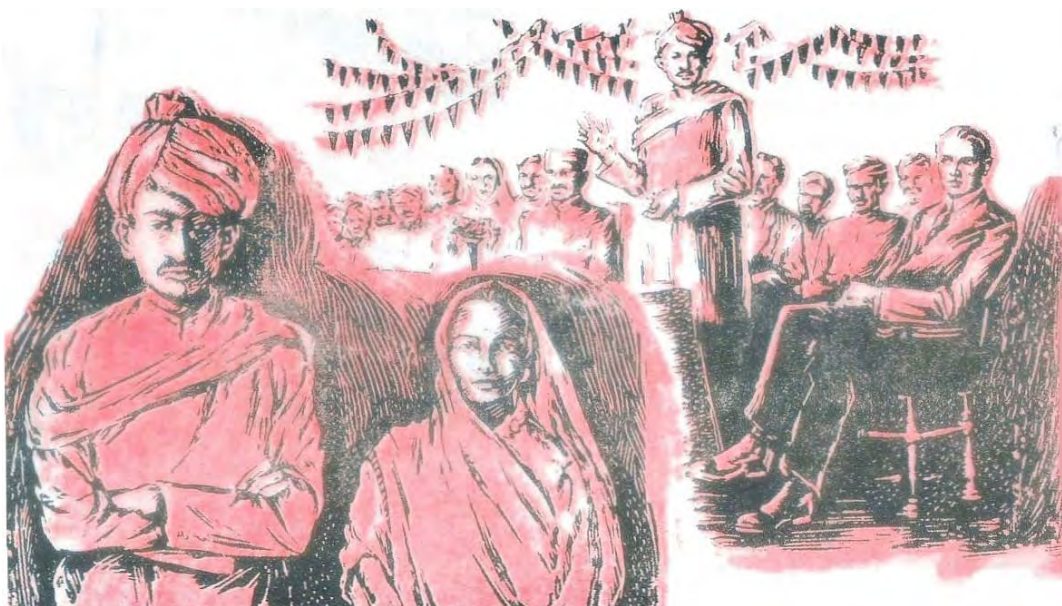
When Gandhiji left South Africa on July 18, 1914, he was given a loving send-off by thousands of weeping Indians. This was something that had never been seen before in that country.

He did not return straight home. After a short stay in England, he came back to India.

In Bombay, numerous receptions were held in his honour. At one of them, Jinnah made a welcome speech and paid him high tributes.

Gandhiji travelled all over India for many months, visiting holy places, meeting priests, merchants, beggars and all types of people. He always travelled by third class, sharing the hardships of the poor, learning to understand them and their troubles.

Then he decided to live with his small band of followers





in an ashram. He set it up in a small village, Kochrab, near Ahmedabad. It was founded on May 25, 1915. A year later, it was shifted to the banks of the Sabarmati river, also near Ahmedabad.

All who joined the Ashram had to promise to be always truthful, non-violent, fearless and to observe strict self-control. They had to lead a simple life, working in their surroundings and taking only what the neighbours offered.

There were 25 men and women at the Ashram. All lived as one family.

It was in this Ashram that Gandhiji was first introduced to the spinning-wheel or "charkha". "Even in 1915," he wrote, "when I returned to India from South Africa, I had not actually seen a spinning-wheel." Now with the help of a friend, a Gujarati widow, he was able to secure a "charkha" With great eagerness, he learned how to produce "khadi"

After that he and his followers always wore cloth spun and woven by themselves.

A few months later, Gandhiji took an "untouchable" or low-caste family of three, Dudabhai, Daniben and their small daughter, Lakshmi, into the Ashram.

This upset the orthodox Hindus of the village and made them angry. They stopped giving food and money to the Ashram. But Gandhiji refused to send the "untouchables" away. He was prepared to close down the Ashram rather than do anything wrong.

At last, there was no money left, and Gandhiji was preparing to leave, when a rich gentleman whom he hardly knew drove to the Ashram and gave Gandhiji Rs. 13,000 in cash. The Ashram was saved.



Gandhiji kept up his contacts with the masses. Often those who felt that they were being unjustly treated, workers in factories and on plantations, appealed to him for help. He stressed the need for loyalty to truth and the strength of those who fought truthfully.

He went to Champaran in Bihar, when called there. Served with an order to leave the district, he refused to obey it. He was summoned to stand trial.

The court-room was packed and the Government did not want to proceed with the case. Gandhiji pleaded guilty, but the case was postponed. Later, it was withdrawn, and an official inquiry favoured the workers. Yet another battle had been won.





Thus he continued to go to all places, giving whatever help he could. He did not spare himself, and suffered inconveniences.

Once he fell ill with dysentery. When he reached Nadiad in Gujarat, he had high fever and was in great pain. He tossed about in bed as his health failed.

He could not read and could hardly speak. He ate nothing, took no medicine. He even refused cow's milk. Years earlier, he had vowed not to drink milk because cows were ill-treated. Everyone around him was full of anxiety.

Then Kasturba got an idea. Gandhiji's vow was only regarding cow's milk. He, therefore, could drink goat's milk. After some thought, Gandhiji accepted goat's milk. This helped to give him strength and bring him back to health. From that day, goat's milk became a **part** of his diet.

As he was recovering, the Rowlatt Act was passed. It recommended harsh measures, restricting individual liberty, jailing people without proper trial. Still weak, he went to Madras to discuss the steps to fight back.

Thinking about this in Rajagopalachari's house one night, he fell asleep. In a dream he thought of a general *harlal*. Satyagraha required self-purification. Let all the people suspend their business and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer, he said.

The *harlals* that followed in April, 1919 were very successful. There was violence too in some places and



many people were killed. Gandhiji offered to bring about peace in the country, but was not allowed to do so and his movements were restricted.

In the Punjab, which he was not allowed to visit, there was serious rioting. A meeting was announced at Jallianwalla Bagh, in Amritsar.

General Dyer prohibited the meeting. When the crowd assembled, he suddenly appeared in the only exit. Troops with rifles stood near him. Without warning within 30 seconds of his arrival, they opened fire on the unarmed crowd. Shooting continued for full 10 minutes.

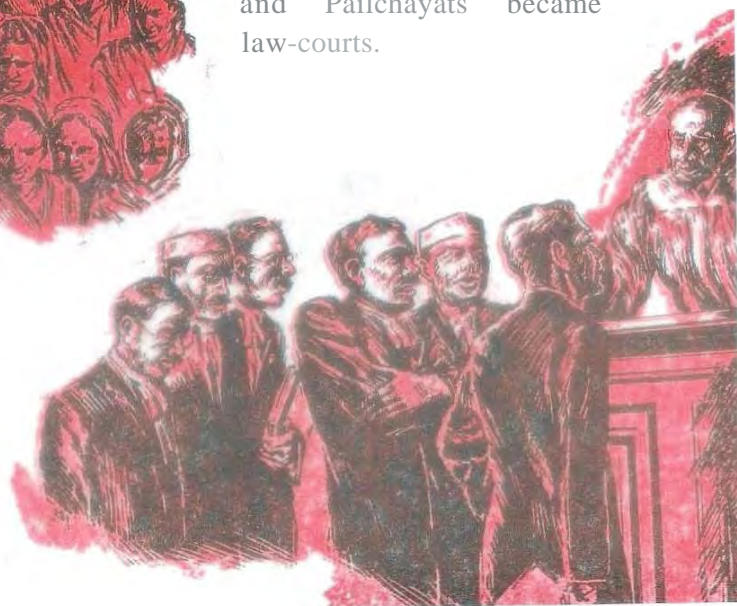
There was no way of escape. **In** an attempt to get away, many fell into a well and were drowned. Over 1,200 were killed and 3,600 wounded.

A reign of terror now followed in the Punjab. People were flogged and subjected to humiliating treatment. Gandhiji lost faith in the British Government.





Gandhiji told his countrymen that they could get swaraj (self-rule) within a year. But they had wholeheartedly to support every programme of **non-cooperation** that was launched. There were *hartals*, processions, strikes. But none of them was violent. The spirit behind the campaign was emphasised when the idea of attainment of swaraj through "legitimate means" was expanded to "legitimate and peaceful means". Lawyers gave up their practice and Pailchayats became law-courts.





Students deserted schools and colleges, which Gandhiji called "factories for making clerks and government servants", to participate in the freedom struggle. The Gandhi cap and homespun khaddar became the armour of freedom fighters. The "charkha" became the symbol of the salvation of India. It provided a source of additional income, meagre though this was, to the peasants, who were unemployed for a part of the year. The "charkha" could free India from being dependent on imported cloth.



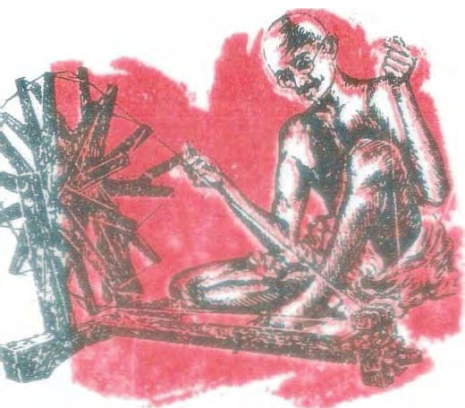


Gandhiji's genius lay in his ability to appeal to the masses. Simply, with familiar images, he spoke to the illiterate thousands in language they could understand. And this accounted for the massive support they gave him.

He organised in Bombay a huge bonfire to show how machine-made foreign cloth had ruined the Indian cottage industry. Thousands came to witness this spectacle. As the flames leapt up and encircled the whole pile, a shout of joy resounded through the air. "It has, I am sure, struck the imagination of the people as nothing else could have, so far as swadeshi is concerned!" he wrote recalling the event. "It is a sin to wear foreign cloth. In burning my foreign clothes, I burn my shame...."

Clad only in a loin-cloth. Gandhiji represented the common Indian, the peasant. He became the voice of India. For the first time the Indian masses began to take interest in politics.

The swadeshi movement was a great success. Gandhiji plied the "charkha" every day and asked the people to do the same.



Soon 20 lakhs of "charkhas" began to hum in India's villages. The "charkha" became a symbol of national self-sufficiency in cloth



The Civil Disobedience Movement continued. But because it had also resulted in violence, Gandhiji suggested that it be withdrawn.

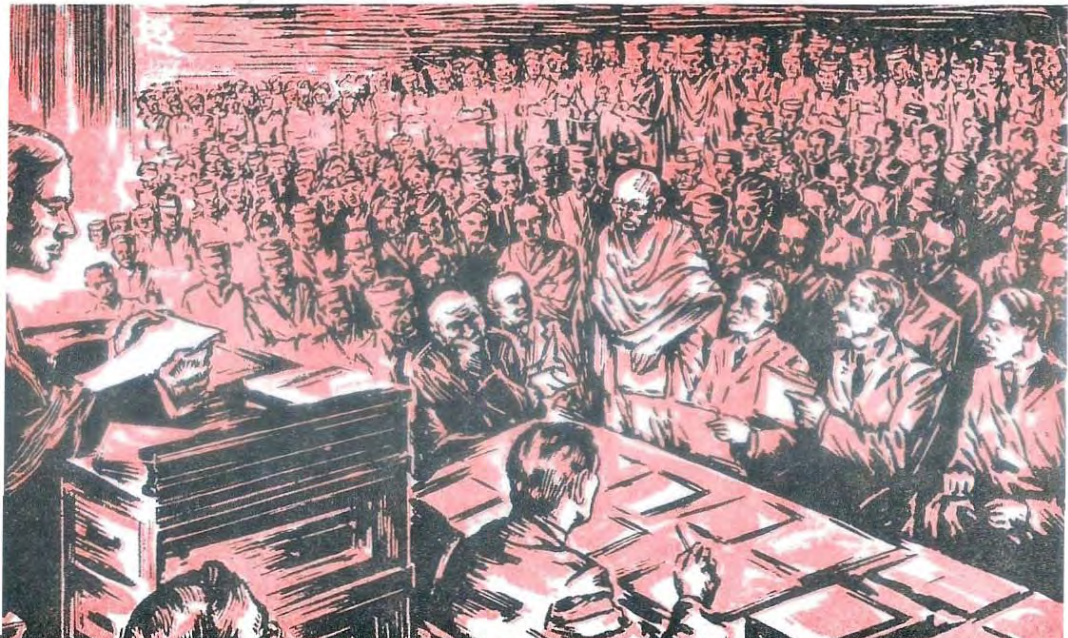
However, in March, 1922, he was arrested for writing critical articles in his journal, "Young India". He was taken to Sabarmati **Jail**. The trial opened in Ahmedabad.

As he entered the court, frail and serene, in a coarse loin-cloth, everyone rose. They were paying homage to a great man. The trial proceeded. Gandhiji denounced the Government system as it **was**. He called it evil. He accepted that he had preached against it; but his weapon was non-violence. He was sentenced to six years' jail.

The case aroused such a lot of interest all over the world, that the British never again tried him openly like that.

In jail, he wrote his autobiography, now regarded as one of the greatest books ever written in prison. He had plenty of time for study and used it all fruitfully.

In the beginning of 1924, he fell seriously ill. He was suffering from abdominal pain and fever. Removed to a





hospital in Poona, he had to undergo an operation for appendicitis. While this was being performed, the lights failed and the surgeon had to work in the light of a hurricane lantern. Gandhiji was released in March, 1924.

Gandhiji was taken to a little bungalow at Juhu Beach, near Bombay. While he was recovering, riots broke out in many parts of the country.

Though still weak, he decided to begin a 21-day fast on September 18. This was to be an act of penance for the "sins of his people".





Gandhiji turned to constructive work, but Government measures kept drawing his attention. He had to advise people and lead them to help themselves.

In 1930, he asked the Viceroy to remove the Salt Tax. Since salt was needed by all for their food, the tax fell most heavily on the poor. If it were removed, the poorest would gain the most.

The Government refused to do so and Gandhiji, therefore, announced that he would publicly break the law.

He chose the village of Dandi on the seashore 200 miles from his Ashram as the place where he would break the law. On March 12, at 6:30 in the morning, he was ready to depart. There was a soft smile on his face, a staff in his hand, and determination in his gentle eyes.

With him stood 79 followers from the Ashram. Together they promised not to return until the tax on salt was removed. Then they began to march.

The news of the march spread far and wide. Thousands came to watch, but they also came to cheer this fearless leader who was afraid of no power on earth. Hundreds of them joined the march.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who joined them for a while, describes the scene in these words: "I saw him, staff in hand, marching along at the head of his followers, with firm step and a peaceful but fearless look. It was a moving sight."









After twenty-four days, the marchers reached the seashore at Dandi. It was April 5. That night they spent in prayer and fasting. In the morning, they all bathed in the sea. At half-past eight, Gandhiji bent down and picked up a lump of salt. By that simple act, he broke the law. The people who had gathered there cheered. The marchers were thrilled with joy.

Sarojini Naidu, filled with excitement, cried out, "Hail, Deliverer!"

This was the signal for which the country had been waiting. All over the land, in villages and towns, men and women began manufacturing and selling salt, without paying any tax. On May 4, the Government arrested Gandhiji and imprisoned him in Yeravda Jail, near Poona.

Gandhiji had wanted to set out for Dharasana. Now, Mrs. Naiducarried out his **plan**. Under her leadership, 2,500 non-violent volunteers raide'd the Dharasana salt depot. The salt pans were surrounded with barbed wire and ditches. Four hundred policemen armed with lathis and 25 with rifles stood by ready.

At some distance **from** the fence, the satyagrahis stoped. One column **went** forward into the ditches and to**wards** the barbed wire. The policemen charged into the **marchers** and struck them on their **heads** with their steel**-tipped** lathis.

Not one of the group raised even an arm to defend himself. They fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with pain, with broken skulls or shoulders, their white clothes colour-edwith blood.

Fear never once took hold of the marchers. After one column had been crushed, another advanced. There was no fighting, resistance or struggle. The marchers simply went **forward** until they **were** struck down.

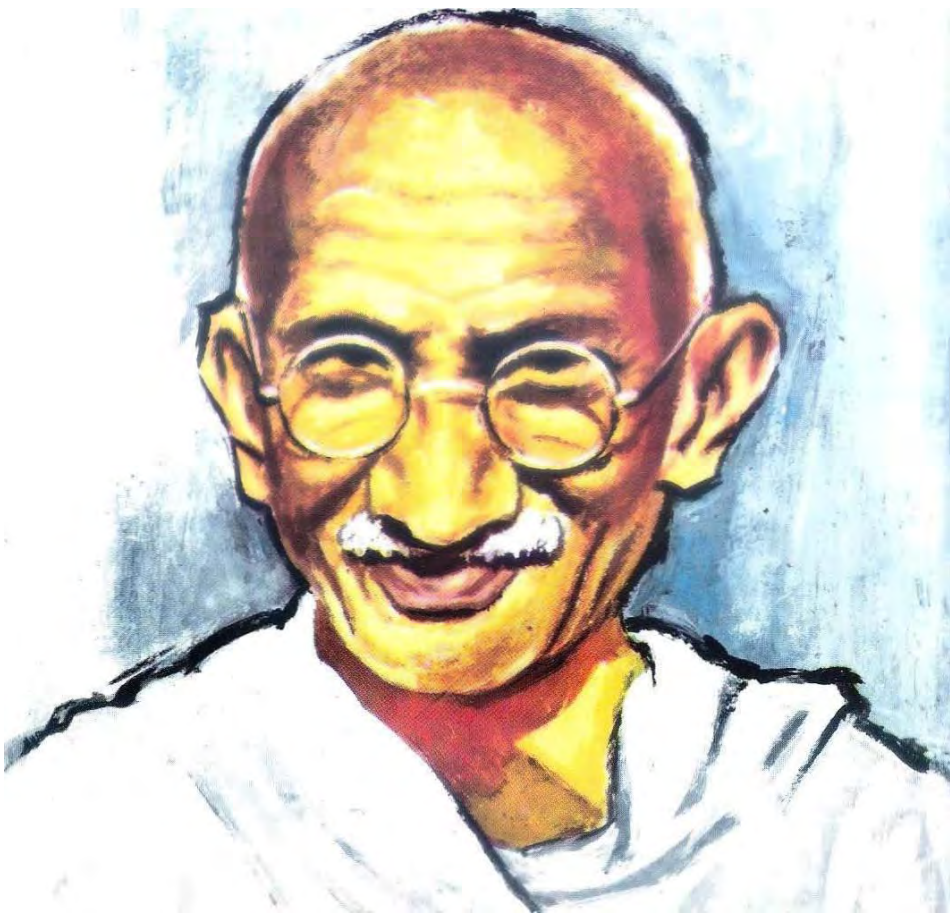
The **savage** action of the British Govern-ment turned the whole country against it. The sight of such brave, non-violent behaviour on the part of the satyagrahis





who bore the brutal repression silently and without protest evoked admiration and respect for them and the cause they represented.

Everywhere one got proof of quiet, undaunted courage of a determined and heroic people, in earnest to win back their freedom. And women now came out of the centuries-old seclusion of their homes and fought shoulder-to-shoulder with their menfolk. From that time, Indians could never tolerate British rule in their land.



ISBN 978-81-237-1026-6

NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA